

to come to this floor and debate our strategy in Syria.

#### TRIBUTE TO MARY REGULA

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, at this spring season of new life, please let us pay tribute to the spirited life of a visionary woman dedicated to high learning and civic improvement, Mary Regula from Ohio, who tragically passed this last week.

As an educator first, her love of history drew her to national causes. Mary had a style and a spirit all her own. I vividly recall her dressing as Mary Todd Lincoln at the dedication of the First Ladies Museum in Canton, Ohio, which she had spearheaded, as she dutifully and lovingly put in place fascinating historical truth about a long-neglected dimension of American political life.

A soulmate to her beloved husband, the very honorable Ohio Congressman Ralph Regula, Mary was a beautiful and engaging force for good and for progress on many levels.

On countless late nights here in the Capitol, she would work into the evening with her husband. Then, when votes were complete, they would drive home together, usually in Ralph's red pickup truck. Their service was a patriotic love of America.

May Mary Regula's family and friends, and the people of greater Canton, Ohio, which Mary and her husband served for 36 years, know our abiding gratitude for their service and for electing such an extraordinary Congressman, a seasoned appropriator, and his awesome life partner, beloved Mary.

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF RHONDA LEROCQUE

(Mr. KIHUEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIHUEN. Madam Speaker, today I rise to remember the life of Rhonda LeRocque. Rhonda attended the Route 91 Festival in Las Vegas on October 1.

Rhonda was married to her husband, Jason, for 21 years, with whom she had a 6-year-old daughter, Ali.

Rhonda and Jason were very active in their church and enjoyed participating in humanitarian projects together. One of their biggest projects was when they traveled to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina to help rebuild homes.

Rhonda worked for a design firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but dreamed of opening up her own catering business. She loved skiing, cooking, and baking, but nothing could surpass her love for her family. She is remembered for being a selfless and joyful woman who had a strong faith.

I would like to extend my condolences to Rhonda LeRocque's family

and friends. Please know that the city of Las Vegas, the State of Nevada, and the whole country grieve with you.

#### INEQUALITY AND FAIRNESS FOR ALL AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. HANDEL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DESAULNIER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I wanted to spend a few moments on what, to me, is the most important domestic issue in our country right now: the issue of inequality and fairness for all Americans. It is at historic levels of disparity from where it should be, historically both from an economic standpoint, an ethical standpoint, and, in my view, a moral standpoint. It is important for Congress to know what the experts know and to share that with this House and with the American public.

I am pleased to partner with some of my good friends: Representative LEE, who I hope will be here soon, a good neighbor in northern California, who has done such extraordinary work around poverty and inequality; and also Ms. DELAURO from Connecticut, who has also helped us to put this Special Order together.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON), my good friend and colleague, and a national spokesperson on issues of inequality.

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from California for yielding. I appreciate all of the work Congressman DESAULNIER does in this area. And I want to thank him for raising this particular issue for this Special Order.

Madam Speaker, I agree with him that inequality is the issue of the moment. Not only does inequality funnel money from working Americans up to the richest people, but what do they do with the money once it is up there? There is only a certain number of boats you can ski behind, only a certain number of houses you can buy, and only a certain number of luxury cars you can buy.

What do the billions go to? Much of it goes to things like merger and acquisition, and also political influence. It is very important to understand that as economic inequality has grown, political inequality has also grown. Nowadays, the money goes into some super-

PAC: some big, giant thing where they do independent expenditures and pour money in against their enemies and pour money in in favor of their friends.

Politics in America has become the battle of the billionaires now. You have to get a billionaire on your side in order to win. I mean, we know that whether it is the Coates', or the Mercers, or the Adelsons, or whoever it is, it is some big, rich person who is going to sponsor a political candidate, and that is who gets to represent us in what is supposed to be a democratic society. So I think that it is critical to make the link between economic inequality and political inequality.

I will say again, when we get economic inequality to the degree that it is, one of the other things that is purchased, besides political influence, is mergers and acquisitions.

I would just like to point out to everybody that it doesn't matter what industry you are talking about, markets are deeply concentrated and anti-competitive. If you are talking about like a pharmacy—not a pharmaceutical company, but a pharmacy—CVS, Walgreens, we used to have Rite Aid and, of course, they merged together. And, of course, there is another merger coming up. Every day you open the paper, there is some other big company buying up some other big company, concentrating markets, making the barriers to entry even higher so that the small-business person is just locked out.

It costs a lot to get into business now. If your opponent, who is some big, huge company, doesn't want you in the market, they can just drop their prices, suffer the losses, because they are big, run you out of business, and raise them right back on up.

But if you look at any market—beer, hamburger, chicken, online search engines, anything you want—almost all of them are deeply concentrated—two, three, maybe four—companies representing 80 or 90 percent of the industry, which cuts off opportunity, limits competition, and it is bad for the American people.

Madam Speaker, I have a few more things to share, but I will kick it back to Congressman DESAULNIER for now. Maybe he can kick it back to me a little later, and we will just have a conversation for a little while.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Madam Speaker, that sounds good to me.

Madam Speaker, I do want to say, as a former small-business owner, having owned restaurants in the San Francisco Bay area for many years, I can definitely identify with your comments that all too often Main Street America, those entrepreneurs who employ most of our workers, are at a distinct disadvantage.

□ 1730

And, unfortunately, I always felt this as a small independent restaurant owner, that the desires of a lot of my fellow restaurateurs that were nationally owned were not necessarily my desires. I supported the community. I was